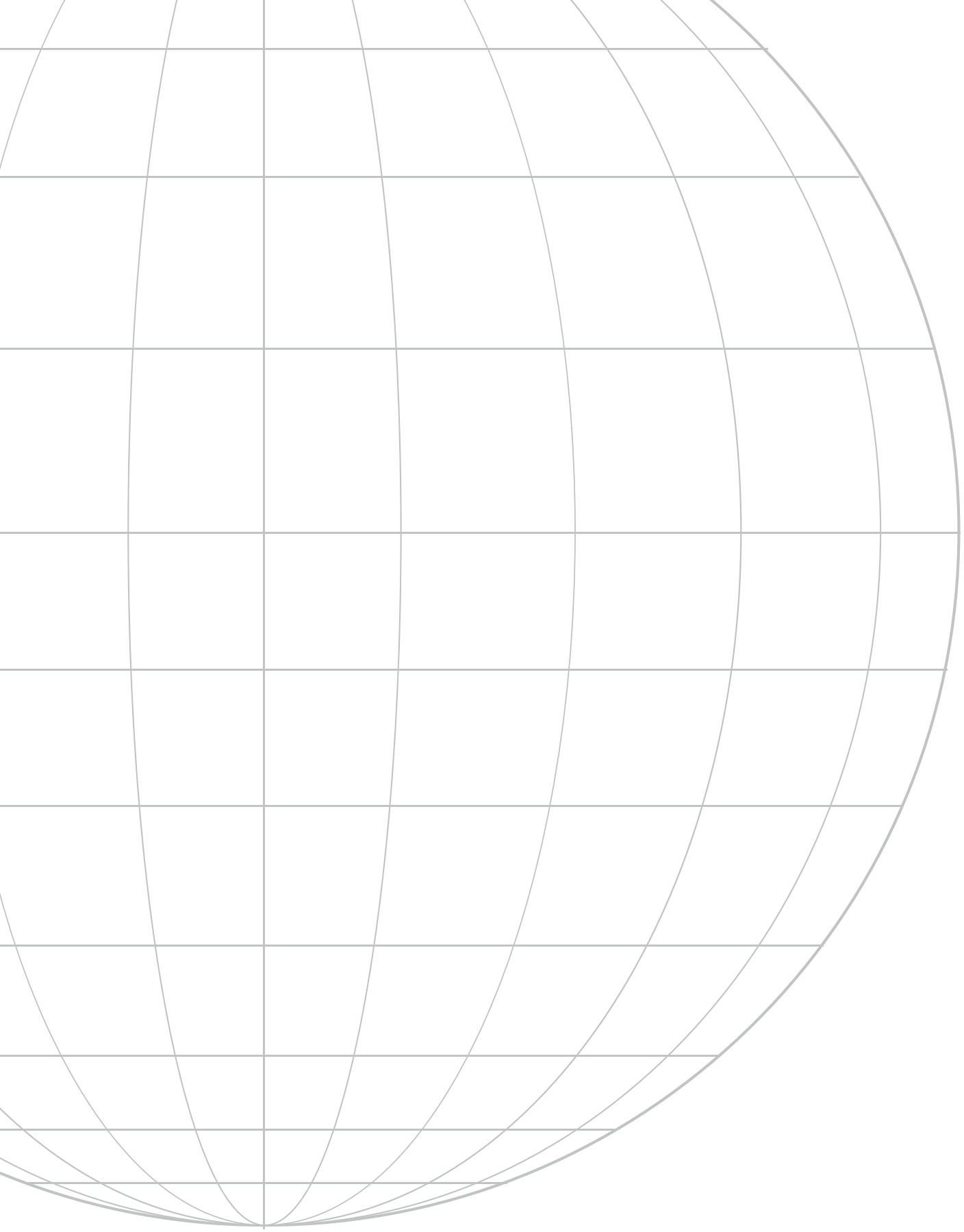
The Commitment of the United States of America to Article VI of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons

2005



The central objective of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The NPT is also designed to further arms control and disarmament efforts, both nuclear and nonnuclear, as provided for in Article VI of the Treaty. Under Article VI, all parties pledge to pursue good-faith negotiations on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, to nuclear disarmament and to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The United States reaffirmed the substance of these pledges in 1995 and 2000.

The United States is fully committed to the NPT and believes all states must comply with the obligations of the Treaty. The United States takes all of its treaty obligations, including those in Article VI, seriously and is in full compliance with this article. The United States and Russia effectively ended the Cold War nuclear arms race more than 15 years ago. More recently, the United States codified with Russia significant reductions in operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons. Further, the United States is reducing reliance on nuclear weapons as part of its national security strategy and has plans underway to reduce its total stockpile unilaterally by almost 50 percent by the end of 2012.

The United States is taking other steps to reduce nuclear dangers, including Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programs. These activities are substantial and serious, but have to a large degree been overshadowed by debates on the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), some National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) programs and the 2002 Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions, also known as the Moscow Treaty. In these debates, U.S. positions and actions have sometimes been misunderstood or mischaracterized. It is important to correct the record.

Progress in Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation

1987
U.S. and Soviet Union conclude Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

1990
U.S. removes last INF missiles from Europe; all were subsequently eliminated

U.S. Senate ratifies the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful NuclearExplosions Treaty

1991
U.S. Congress passes legislation establishing Cooperative Threat Reduction program with Russia

START signed

1992
U.S. and Russian Presidential Nuclear Initiatives reduce nonstrategic nuclear forces

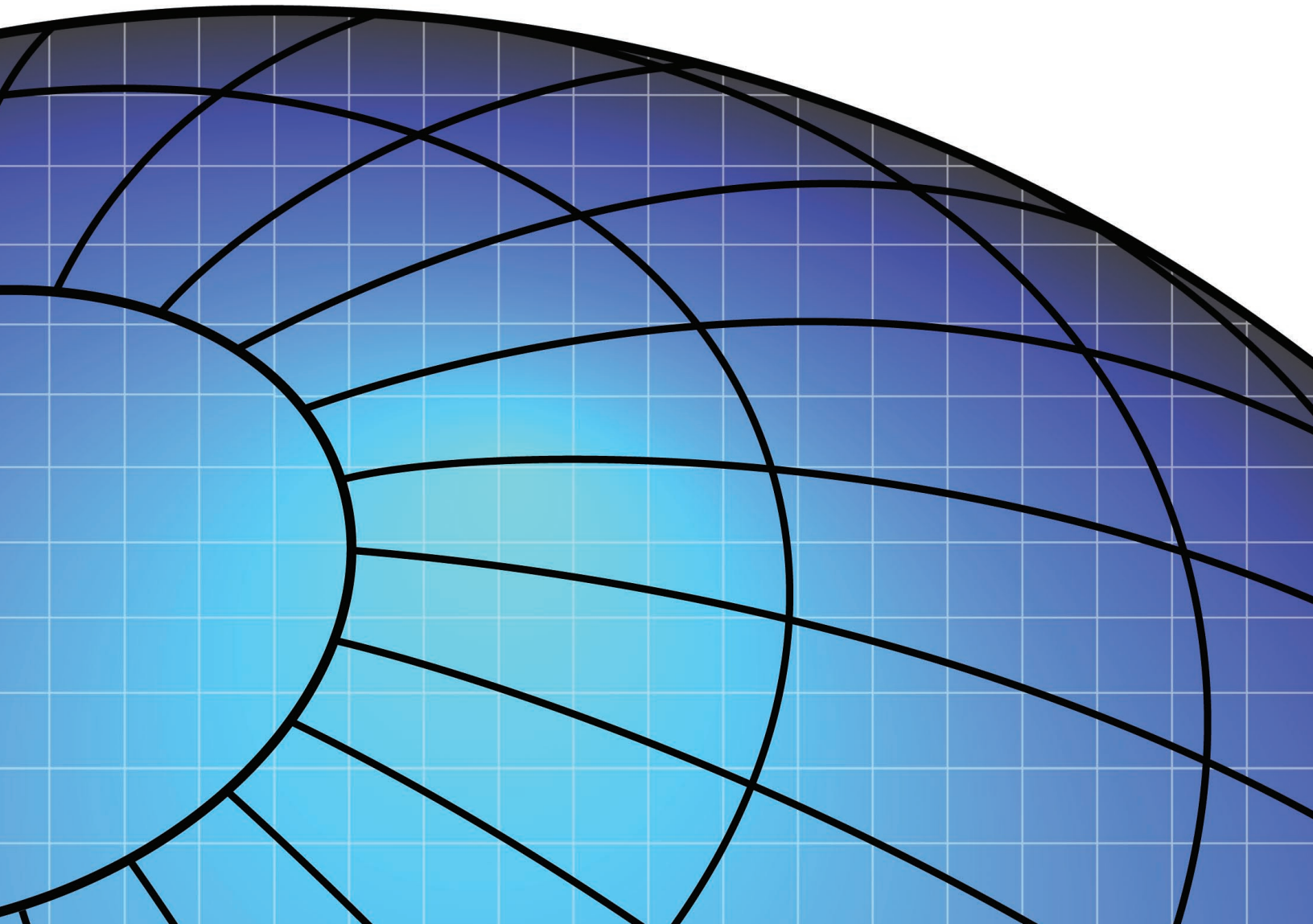
U.S. announces that it will not produce plutonium for nuclear weapon purposes

U.S. Senate gives advice and consent to START ratification

Under the Lisbon Protocol, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan agree to be START parties and join the NPT as nonnuclear-weapon states

1993
U.S. declares intent to withdraw excess fissile material from its weapon program

U.S. and Russia sign HEU purchase agreement



1994
U.S. Nuclear Posture Review codifies reduced role of U.S. nuclear weapons

U.S. and Russia agree to detarget strategic nuclear missiles on a-day-to-day basis

U.S.–Russian cooperative Material Protection Control and Accounting program begins

U.S. and Russia agree to end production of plutonium for weapons and to shut down or convert the remaining Russian plutonium production reactors

START enters into force with the United States, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine as parties.

1995
200 tonnes of excess fissile material withdrawn from the U.S. weapon program

U.S. and Russia announce that no newly produced fissile material will be used to manufacture nuclear weapons

NPT extended indefinitely

1996
U.S. signs relevant protocols of South Pacific and African nuclear weapon-free zone treaties

1997
IAEA begins to verify HEU downblending in the U.S.

U.S.-Russian Plutonium Production Reactor Agreement enters into force

IAEA Additional Protocol concluded

1998
U.S. Nuclear Cities Initiative begins in Russia

U.S. and Russia affirm intention to withdraw up to 50 tonnes of plutonium from nuclear-weapon programs

1999
NATO's Strategic Concept reflects the Alliance's greatly reduced reliance on nuclear weapons

2001
In a speech, President Bush calls for lowest number of nuclear weapons consistent with U.S. security, including U.S. obligations to its allies

Nuclear Posture Review puts forward a New Triad and dramatically reduces U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons: Peacekeeper ICBMs to be eliminated; four strategic ballistic missile submarines to be taken out of strategic service; and B-1 bombers to no longer be nuclear capable

2002
Moscow Treaty concluded, committing the U.S. and Russia to dramatically cutting operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads (to be fully implemented by the end of 2012)

G-8 Global Partnership Pledge

2003
Proliferation Security Initiative

Last of the U.S. nonstrategic nuclear systems reduced under the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives are eliminated

Plutonium Production Reactor Agreement implementation agreement

2004
Libya agrees to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction programs and missile delivery systems

US Senate ratifies the IAEA Additional Protocol

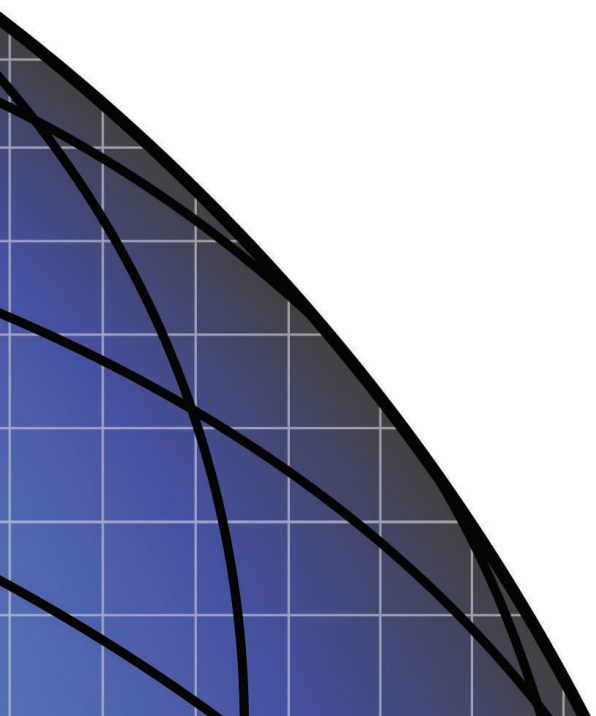
Global Threat Reduction Initiative announced

Presidential decision to reduce stockpile, including reserve forces, by nearly one half (to be completed by the end of 2012)

G-8 Sea Island Summit agreed to expand Global Partnership

President Bush announced initiatives to strengthen the NPT regime

2005
Deactivation of all 50 Peacekeeper missiles by end of year



Reducing Reliance on Nuclear Weapons

The United States has significantly reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons. The Defense Department's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review codified the diminished role of nuclear weapons in post-Cold War U.S. defense strategy.

Some have claimed that the NPR of 2001, unlike the one of 1994, did not reduce the role of nuclear weapons and even expanded their role. In reality, however, the 2001 NPR continues the trends of the last decade and dramatically reduces U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons along with their numbers. To this end the NPR embodies a commitment made by President George W. Bush when he declared that the United States will reduce its nuclear forces to the lowest levels consistent with U.S. and international security.

Importantly, the 2001 NPR also establishes a New Triad, one that places far less reliance on nuclear capabilities than did its predecessor. During the Cold War and until the NPR of 2001, the U.S. triad included intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and long-range bombers armed with strategic nuclear weapons. The concept of the New Triad includes:

- nonnuclear and nuclear forces;
- active and passive defenses, including ballistic missile defenses; and
- the research and development and industrial infrastructure needed to develop, build and maintain offensive forces and defensive systems.

This concept illustrates the profound changes that are occurring. It reflects a totally new vision of the future. The NPR recognizes that some deterrence roles will continue to require nuclear forces for the foreseeable future, but envisions the strengthening of deterrence through the growing ability to hold certain targets at risk with conventional, rather than nuclear forces. Defenses, and capabilities embodied in infrastructure, are also seen to play a growing role in achieving deterrence and other strategic objectives, and allowing the U.S. to reduce its reliance on nuclear deterrence.

The NPR builds on the circumstances that ended the Cold War nuclear arms race and reflects the fact that the United States is working to encourage a cooperative, non-adversarial relationship with Russia that sets aside Cold War hostilities and ends the outdated notion of mutually assured destruction. Indeed, the United States does not target any country with nuclear weapons. Strategic bombers are no longer on alert. Dual-capable aircraft no longer operate on a high-alert basis, and their readiness requirements now are measured in weeks and months, rather than minutes. NATO no longer maintains nuclear contingency plans and associated targets for its nuclear forces.

On May 1, 2001, President Bush stated his commitment to "…achieving a credible deterrent with the lowest-possible number of nuclear weapons…." Photo courtesy of the National Defense University.

It is in this context of significantly fewer nuclear weapons, and a dramatically reduced role and posture for the remaining weapons, that one must consider the NPR and assess the criticism.

The charge that the 2001 NPR called for new nuclear weapons is not correct. The United States is not developing, testing or producing any nuclear warheads and has not done so in more than a decade.

In this regard, there are two activities that have been debated extensively:

- a modest research effort on advanced nuclear-weapon concepts that Congress recently redirected to study technologies to enhance confidence in warhead reliability without testing; and
- a study on whether—without testing—an existing weapon could be adapted to hold at risk hardened, deeply buried targets.

These activities have been mischaracterized by critics. The research on advanced concepts had multiple purposes, including the furtherance of stockpile stewardship, which is the ongoing U.S. effort to ensure the safety and reliability of its nuclear weapons without testing. In similar fashion, the robust nuclear earth penetrator (RNEP) study is intended to look at one possible way to enhance deterrence using an existing warhead. There has been no decision to move beyond the study stage, which will require Presidential and congressional action. It should also be remembered that nuclear-weapon modernization by nuclear-weapon states is not prohibited under the NPT. To date, nuclear modernization has not been a central issue in the historic Article VI debate, nor should it be in a time of shrinking stockpiles.

Critics have also argued that leaders would see low-yield weapons as readily usable, and that the nuclear threshold would be lowered as a consequence of their development. This is just not the case. Since the 1950s, the United States has had low-yield weapons. There were thousands at the height of the Cold War. They have not been used. A decision to use nuclear weapons, which must be made by the President, is not easier if yields are lower. The nuclear threshold has always been very high and will remain so.

The relationship between U.S. nuclear weapons and decisions of other states to honor their nonproliferation obligations is also not that which critics have claimed. The assertion that North Korea or Iran are driven to nuclear weapons by current U.S. policy is not based on any evidence. The programs of these states and others that have violated their nonproliferation obligations predate current U.S. policy. Indeed, they pursued their nuclear-weapon ambitions in spite of the historical reductions in nuclear force levels that the United States and Russia pursued over nearly two decades, a period of undeniable Article VI progress. Would they stop even if the United States completely disarmed? And what would be the regional consequences if the United States could no longer offer historic assurances to allies who might otherwise feel compelled to pursue nuclear weapons of their own?

The United States has also been criticized about nuclear testing. Despite the claims of critics, the NPR did not call for a resumption of testing. The United States has maintained and confirmed its moratorium, which was begun more than a decade ago. It has no plans to conduct nuclear tests. The enhanced test readiness program, designed to reduce the time required to undertake a nuclear test, should one ever be needed, is not a signal of an intention to resume testing. Among its objectives is to provide a means by which appropriate capabilities for, and training of, future stewards of the stockpile will be ensured.

The modest efforts aimed at correcting shortfalls in U.S. capabilities do not presume future decisions, and they may never result in new weapons or tests They are designed to ensure that so long as we possess nuclear weapons, we will have the capability to deal with them safely and responsibly.

Critics have also looked at the modest efforts intended to address inadequacies in the nuclear complex as inconsistent with Article VI and as boding ill for arms reductions. The opposite is true. The U.S. nuclear infrastructure has been downsized. A series of actions have been taken to reduce or consolidate the U.S. nuclear-weapon production complex over the last decade and a half. The nuclear workforce has been reduced. Of the 16 major sites and facilities that formed the core of the U.S. nuclear-weapon production complex during the Cold War, four sites have been closed or converted. In addition, the United States halted the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons in 1988 and all U.S. plutonium production reactors at Hanford and Savannah River and the Oak Ridge K-25 enrichment plant have been shut down. The United States has not produced highly enriched uranium (HEU) for nuclear weapons since 1964, and ceased HEU production for any purposes at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in 1992.

Building B707 at Rocky Flats, Colorado, was the key producer of plutonium pits for the United States nuclear arsenal from 1970 to 1989. This December 13, 2004, photo shows its destruction. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of Energy.

Reducing Nuclear Arsenals

The United States, together with Russia, is progressively and systematically reducing its nuclear forces. More recent deep strategic nuclear reductions were presaged by the 1987 Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate- Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF) Treaty and the 1991-1992 unilateral Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs). With the INF Treaty, the United States eliminated all its ground-based intermediate-range missiles—an entire class of weapons.

U.S. nonstrategic nuclear forces (NSNF) deployed in NATO have been reduced by 90 percent from Cold War levels. As part of the PNIs, all U.S. NSNF were also removed from surface ships, submarines and land-based naval aircraft bases. In l992, the United States completed its worldwide withdrawal and retirement of the U.S. stockpile of nuclear artillery shells, Lance missile warheads, and naval nuclear depth bombs. For the United States, over 3000 weapons have been dismantled as a result of the PNIs. The last of the eliminations pledged in the PNIs was completed in 2003. The number of storage sites in NATO for nonstrategic nuclear weapons has been reduced by about 80 percent.

Under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), the United States reduced its nuclear forces to 6000 accountable nuclear warheads. It reduced its number of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles to well below 1600 launchers and heavy bombers. About 3400 nuclear warheads were removed from Minuteman, Trident and Poseidon missiles.

The 2002 Moscow Treaty, furthers this effort by dramatically reducing operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads and furthering a new relationship with Russia. This Treaty involved a new type of negotiation that was not the product of an adversarial process. In this, and other ways, the Moscow Treaty is different from Cold War-era treaties. The Treaty is an effective, legally binding instrument to reduce nuclear arms. Its substance is significant and signals fundamental changes in the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship and the role of nuclear arms control in the 21st century security environment. The Moscow Treaty is also an important demonstration of the continuing U.S. commitment to Article VI.

Reflecting new thinking about the future of nuclear weapons embodied in the NPR, the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads will be reduced under the Moscow Treaty to 1700-2200 by the end of 2012. As a consequence of the combined impact of START and the Moscow Treaty, by the end of 2012 the United States will have reduced its operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads by 80 percent from the levels of the early 1990s. U.S. reductions under the Moscow Treaty are already well underway: all 50 Peacekeeper missiles will be deactivated by the end of this year; four Trident missile submarines have already been removed from strategic service; and Minuteman ICBMs are being converted to single-warhead missiles.

At the Kremlin on May 24, 2002, President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the Moscow Treaty, which will reduce the number of strategic warheads operationally deployed by the U.S. and Russia to 1700-2200. Photo courtesy of the White House

Despite its direct contribution to meeting Article VI goals, the Moscow Treaty has also been criticized on the grounds that the disposition of warheads is not specifically addressed. However, no previous formal arms control agreement has included warheads. In addition, some warheads removed from operational service as a result of the Moscow Treaty will be retired and dismantled; others will be stored or disabled. The latter will be available if spares are needed in case a warhead is found to be unreliable or unsafe—a contingency for which the United States must plan.

The reserve force that will remain has also been criticized, despite the fact that deployed nuclear forces have always been supported by a stockpile reserve. It has always been necessary to maintain a stockpile reserve to support performing routine maintenance, providing logistics spares, replacing weapons eliminated during nonnuclear destructive testing, etc., and to hedge against geopolitical change and against technical failures. Nevertheless, the May 2004 Presidential decision on the size of the stockpile heralds significant reductions in the stockpile. By the end of 2012, the remaining stockpile will be reduced by nearly a half. This will be the smallest U.S. nuclear stockpile in decades.

Nuclear weapons removed from the U.S. stockpile are transferred to the Pantex facility in Amarillo, Texas, for storage pending ultimate disposition. This photograph shows the type of containers used at Pantex.

The size of these reserves reflects, in part, one aspect of the current U.S. nuclear-weapon complex. Progress on nuclear arms control and disarmament has involved not just reductions in deployed weapons, but also significant reductions in Cold War weapon infrastructures. As the United States reduced its numbers of nuclear weapons, it has also transformed the means to build them. As noted above, over the past decade, the United States has dramatically reduced the size, role and mission of its nuclear-weapon complex. The downsizing of the complex was intentional, but there have also been some unintended infrastructure shortfalls. As we have downsized the complex, we have also downsized our capability to dismantle nuclear warheads quickly. Moreover, capability to replace aging warheads has atrophied. These problems need to be addressed; replacing aging warheads is very important for safety reasons and a high priority for the United States.

As the infrastructure issues are addressed, the United States will have the opportunity to review the numbers of warheads in the reserve force, with a view to reducing the numbers further. If the United States decides to undertake further reductions, infrastructure enhancements could allow a more rapid dismantlement effort.

The Moscow Treaty has also been criticized because it does not include nonstrategic nuclear forces. As noted above, starting with the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of the early 1990s, the U.S. has unilaterally reduced its nonstrategic nuclear weapons in NATO by 90 percent from Cold War levels. The United States is also working directly with Russia on information exchanges on nuclear safety and security issues related to remaining NSNF and, both bilaterally and through NATO, on NSNF confidence-building measures.

Reducing Nuclear Risks

The United States and Russia, together with other states, are working to reduce the nuclear risks in the former Soviet Union and beyond. These efforts have been done unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally, and have involved an unprecedented—and once unthinkable—set of initiatives and programs that encompass both traditional arms control and new, complementary measures. The U.S. program of Cooperative Threat Reduction, originally sponsored by Senators Sam Nunn and Dick Lugar, has helped make fundamental changes in the political and strategic landscape of the former Soviet Union. Under the aegis of the CTR, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus became nonnuclear-weapon states by safely returning to Russia more than 3000 nuclear warheads and by eliminating strategic bombers, ballistic missiles and silo launchers. Through the diplomatic initiatives of the United States and other key states—and their own courageous decisions—these states foreswore nuclear weapons forever.

The CTR program has assisted Russia in eliminating strategic offensive delivery vehicles to START levels and below. It has provided equipment and services for dismantlement or elimination of more than 1000 ballistic missiles, more than 600 air-to-surface nuclear missiles, 126 strategic bombers, 27 ballistic missile submarines and hundreds of ICBM silo launchers. In addition, over 5500 Russian nuclear warheads in all have been deactivated.

In the early 1990s as well, as an outgrowth of the CTR program, the United States established the Material Protection, Control and Accounting (MPC&A) program to provide nuclear security support for nuclear sites in the former Soviet Union that possess weapon-useable nuclear material that is not in weapon form. The mission of this effort is to reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation and terrorism by rapidly improving the security of such nuclear material in Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union.

The MPC&A program provides physical protection systems (security fences, hardened buildings and vaults, etc.) as well as material control and accounting systems. This effort has led to greater security for and even partial elimination of Russian weapon-origin material.

Cooperative Threat Reduction Program assistance enabled Kazakstan to eliminate ballistic missile silos. This 1997 photo depicts blown silo headworks from a former SS-18 missile silo. Photo courtesy of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

Among the achievements are accelerated efforts to secure 600 metric tonnes (MT) of weapon-usable material in Russia. Nearly 70 percent of the sites where vulnerable material is stored have already been secured. We expect to finish this work by 2008. We have also begun a program with Russia to upgrade security at its Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) sites by the end of 2008. We have, to date, improved physical security at 3 SRF sites, and 30 of 39 Russian naval warhead storage sites.

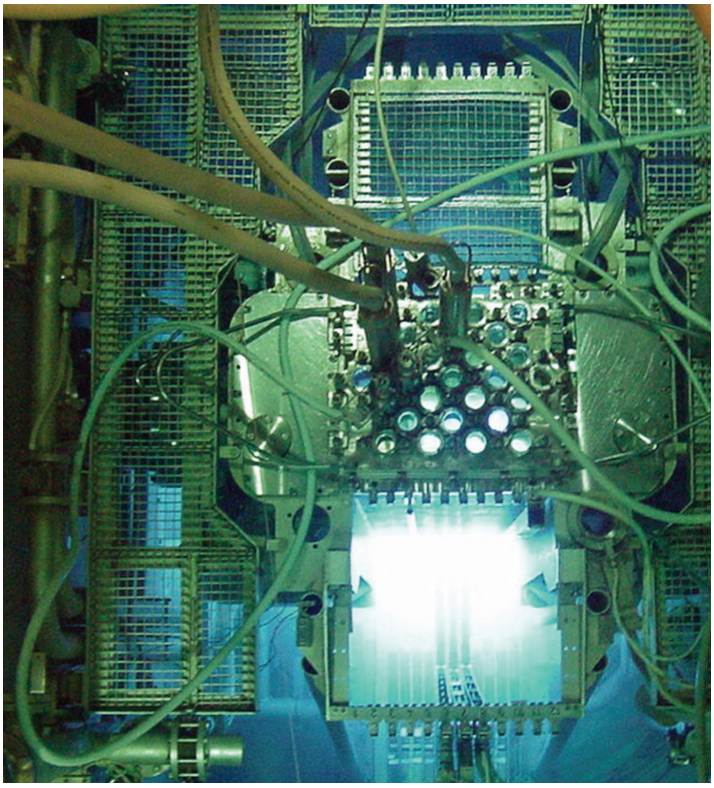
In 1997, we entered into the bilateral Plutonium Production Reactor Agreement with Russia, which codified the monitoring of 14 shutdown U.S. plutonium production reactors, along with 10 such reactors in Russia. In March 2003, we signed an important implementing agreement that will lead to the shutdown of the last three reactors in Russia still producing weapon-grade plutonium and replace those reactors with fossil fuel plants.

We have already downblended more than 200 MT of HEU from Russia's dismantled nuclear weapons for use in U.S. nuclear power plants—enough material for about 8000 nuclear weapons. An additional 300 MT of Russia's HEU will be converted and used to support civilian nuclear power. We have committed, with Russia, to dispose of 68 tonnes (34 tonnes each) of excess weapon-grade plutonium by burning MOX fuel in power reactors. We have engaged 77,000 former weapons scientists at 180 institutes across the former Soviet Union in non-military, commercial pursuits.

Since 1992, the United States has provided over $9 billion in nonproliferation and threat reduction assistance to the former Soviet Union. The G-8 leaders, in the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, pledged in 2002 to raise up to $20 billion over the next 10 years for nonproliferation, disarmament, counterterrorism and nuclear safety cooperation projects, initially in Russia. Priorities include fissile material disposition, nuclear submarine dismantlement, chemical-weapon destruction, and employment of former weapons scientists. At the G-8 Sea Island Summit in 2004, leaders expanded the Partnership to seven additional donor countries, pledged to continue to work with other former Soviet states to discuss their participation in the Partnership and reaffirmed that they would address proliferation challenges worldwide.

In May 2004, in cooperation with Russia, the United States launched the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) to protect, collect, and secure vulnerable nuclear and radioactive materials worldwide.

While CTR focuses on nuclear and other weapons, material and facilities in Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union, the United States is working in other extensive ways to reduce nuclear risks.



The High Flux Reactor in Petten, the Netherlands, is a major nuclear facility in Europe collaborating with the U.S. in a joint study to convert the reactor from HEU to LEU fuel pursuant to the GTRI. Photo courtesy of the Argonne National Laboratory.

The United States is actively reducing its existing stocks of weapon-useable material. The United States has identified 174 tonnes of excess HEU that will be blended down and used for civil purposes, and we are now in the midst of a study seeking to identify more. To date, over 40 MT of excess U.S. HEU has been downblended for use in commercial reactors. Finally, to achieve its goal of disposing of 34 tonnes of plutonium, the Administration has begun construction of U.S. facilities for processing plutonium into a form no longer usable for nuclear weapons.

The United States has reaffirmed its support for a fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT) and its desire to move forward expeditiously on negotiations. A comprehensive internal U.S. review led to the conclusion that effective verification of an FMCT is not realistically achievable, but we believe a legally binding FMCT would nonetheless make a useful contribution to global security. We believe such a Treaty could be achieved rapidly. In this context, we hope that FMCT negotiations can begin in the Conference on Disarmament without conditions or linkages to other issues. Meanwhile, the United States will continue its moratorium on production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

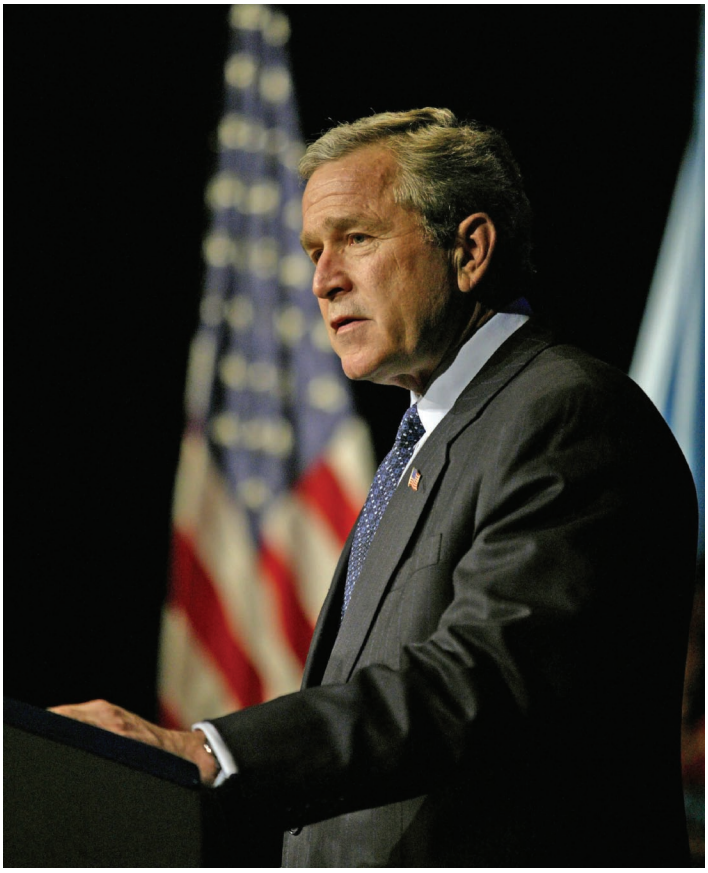
The Advanced Recovery and Integrated Extraction System (ARIES) will recover plutonium from disassembled pits. The recovered oxide will be assayed and sent for fuel fabrication. Photo courtesy of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

A Path of Progress

The United States provides world leadership in realizing Article VI objectives through the deep reductions in nuclear forces undertaken in START and the Moscow Treaty, assistance for Russian disarmament through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program and other actions. The U.S. continues to be a leader in these areas and on many other fronts in support of the NPT. These efforts have resulted in real achievements to reduce nuclear and nonnuclear risks. The United States continues to take unilateral reduction actions as well as to pursue negotiated agreements and to initiate new and innovative programs.

There can be no artificial timetables for progress in realizing our common Article VI objectives. Details and dates cannot and should not be predicted or foreordained. Attempts to do so would not advance, and might undermine, expected progress in arms reductions and disarmament. Instead, progress will depend on the broader international context, including success in promoting regional and international peace and security. U.S. efforts to ensure compliance with the NPT and other undertakings are critical contributions to this end, as are other efforts to strengthen the Treaty, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and export controls. U.S. cooperation with the United Kingdom, the IAEA and Libya to eliminate Libya's nuclear program as part of its broader commitment to eliminate weapons of mass destruction programs and missile delivery systems is an important step toward promoting progress. U.S. support for nuclear-weapon-free zones that meet long-standing U.S. criteria on a case-by-case basis can create conditions conducive to further progress. In addition to efforts to control nuclear weapons, advances in other areas, including chemical, biological and conventional arms control, are also essential to meeting the objectives of Article VI. The United States is active in all of these endeavors. But it is critical for all parties to the Treaty to work together in order to achieve all of the objectives—nuclear and nonnuclear—of Article VI.

The steps we are taking can allow further reductions of nuclear weapons and the achievement of critical nonproliferation objectives, including continued progress on Article VI of the NPT.



On February 11, 2004, in a speech at the National Defense University at Ft. McNair, President George W. Bush puts forward initiatives to strengthen nonproliferation efforts. White House photo by Eric Draper.